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Inspiration /





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# INSPIRATION.

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## INSPIRATION.

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THE word "Inspiration," as applied to the Holy Scriptures, has gradually acquired a specific technical meaning independent of its etymology. At first this word, in the sense of "God-breathed," was used to express the entire agency of God in producing that divine element which distinguishes Scripture from all other writings. It was used in a sense comprehensive of supernatural revelation, while the immense range of providential and gracious divine activities concerning the genesis of the word of God in human language was practically overlooked. But Christian scholars have come to see that this divine element, which penetrates and glorifies Scripture at every point, has entered and become incorporated with it in very various ways, natural, supernatural and gracious, through long courses of providential leading, as well as by direct suggestion—through the spontaneous action of the souls of the sacred writers, as well as by controlling influence from without. It is important that distinguishable

ideas should be connoted by distinct terms, and that the terms themselves should be fixed in a definite sense. Thus we have come to distinguish sharply between Revelation, which is the frequent, and Inspiration, which is the constant, attribute of all the thoughts and statements of Scripture, and between the problem of the genesis of Scripture on the one hand, which includes historic processes and the concurrence of natural and supernatural forces, and must account for all the phenomena of Scripture, and the mere fact of inspiration on the other hand, or the superintendence by God of the writers in the entire process of their writing, which accounts for nothing whatever but the absolute infallibility of the record in which the revelation, once generated, appears in the original autograph. It will be observed that we intentionally avoid applying to this inspiration the predicate "influence." It summoned, on occasion, a great variety of influences, but its essence was superintendence. This superintendence attended the entire process of the genesis of Scripture, and particularly the process of the final composition of the record. It interfered with no spontaneous natural agencies, which were, in themselves, producing results conformable to the mind of the Holy Spirit. On occasion it summoned all needed divine in-



fluences and suggestions, and it sealed the entire record and all its elements, however generated, with the imprimatur of God, sending it to us as his Word.

The importance of limiting the word "inspiration" to a definite and never-varying sense, and one which is shown, by the facts of the case, to be applicable equally to every part of Scripture, is self-evident, and is emphasized by the embarrassment which is continually recurring in the discussions of this subject, arising sometimes from the wide, and sometimes from the various, senses in which this term is used by different parties. The history of theology is full of parallel instances, in which terms of the highest import have come to be accepted in a more fixed and narrow sense than they bore at first either in scriptural or early ecclesiastical usage, and with only a remote relation to their etymology; as, for instance, Regeneration, Sacrament, etc.

#### PRESUPPOSITIONS.

From this definition of the term it is evident that instead of being, in the order of thought, the first religious truth which we embrace, upon which, subsequently, the entire fabric of true religion rests, it is the last and crowning attribute of those sacred books from which we derive

our religious knowledge. Very many religious and historical truths must be established before we come to the question of inspiration; as, for instance, the being and moral government of God, the fallen condition of man, the fact of a redemptive scheme, the general historical truth of the Scriptures, and the validity and authority of the revelation of God's will, which they contain—*i. e.* the general truth of Christianity and its doctrines. Hence it follows that, while the inspiration of the Scriptures is true, and, being true, is a principle fundamental to the adequate interpretation of Scripture, it nevertheless is not in the first instance a principle fundamental to the truth of the Christian religion. In dealing with skeptics it is not proper to begin with the evidence which immediately establishes inspiration, but we should first establish theism, then the historical credibility of the Scriptures, and then the divine origin of Christianity. Nor should we ever allow it to be believed that the truth of Christianity depends upon any doctrine of inspiration whatever. Revelation came in large part before the record of it, and the Christian Church before the New-Testament Scriptures. Inspiration can have no meaning if Christianity is not true, but Christianity would be true and divine—and, being so, would stand—even if God

had not been pleased to give us, in addition to his revelation of saving truth, an infallible record of that revelation absolutely errorless by means of inspiration.

In the second place, it is also evident that our conception of revelation and its methods must be conditioned upon our general views of God's relation to the world, and his methods of influencing the souls of men. The only really dangerous opposition to the Church doctrine of inspiration comes either directly or indirectly, but always ultimately, from some false view of God's relation to the world, of his methods of working, and of the possibility of a supernatural agency penetrating and altering the course of a natural process. But the whole genius of Christianity, all of its essential and most characteristic doctrines, presuppose the immanence of God in all his creatures, and his concurrence with them in all of their spontaneous activities. In him, as an active, intelligent Spirit, we all live and move and have our being. He governs all his creatures and all their actions, working in men even to will and spontaneously to do his good pleasure. The currents, thus, of the divine activities do not only flow around us, conditioning or controlling our action from without, but they none the less flow within the inner current of our personal

lives, confluent with our spontaneous self-movements, and contributing to the effects whatever properties God may see fit that they shall have.

There is also a real logical and ideal, if not a physical, continuity between all the various provinces and methods of God's working: providence and grace, the natural and the supernatural, all constitute one system in the execution of one plan. All these agents and all these methods are so perfectly adjusted in the plan of God that not one interferes with any other, and all are so adjusted and controlled as that each works perfectly, according to the law of its own nature, and yet all together infallibly bring about the result God designs. In this case that design is a record without error of the facts and doctrines he had commissioned his servants to teach.

Of the manner in which God may inform and direct a free intelligence without violating its laws we have a familiar analogy in Nature in the relation of instinct to free intelligence. Intelligence is personal, and involves self-consciousness and liberty. Instinct is impersonal, unconscious, and not free. Both exist alike in man, with whom intelligence predominates, and in the higher animals, with whom instinct predominates. In every case the instinct of the creature is the intelligence of the Creator work-

ing through the creature's spontaneity, informing and directing, yet never violating any of the laws of his free intelligence. And in Nature we can trace this all the way from the instinct of the bee, which works mechanically, to the magic play of the æsthetic instincts, which largely constitute the genius of a great artist. We are not absurdly attempting to draw a parallel between natural instinct and supernatural inspiration. But the illustration is good simply to show that as a matter of fact God does prompt from within the spontaneous activities of his intelligent creatures, leading them by unerring means to ends imperfectly discerned by themselves; and that this activity of God, as in instinct or otherwise, does not in any wise reveal itself, either in consciousness or in the character of the action to which it prompts, as interfering with the personal attributes or the free rational activities of the creature.

#### THE GENESIS OF SCRIPTURE.

We allude here to this wide and as yet imperfectly explored subject only for the purpose of distinctly setting apart the various problems it presents, and isolating the specific point of inspiration, with which we, as well as the Church in general, are more particularly interested. Ali

parties of believers admit that this genesis of Holy Scripture was the result of the co-operation, in various ways, of the agency of men and the agency of God.

The human agency, both in the histories out of which the Scriptures sprang, and in their immediate composition and inscription, is everywhere apparent, and gives substance and form to the entire collection of writings. It is not merely in the matter of verbal expression or literary composition that the personal idiosyncrasies of each author are freely manifested by the untrammelled play of all his faculties, but the very substance of what they write is evidently for the most part the product of their own mental and spiritual activities. This is true except in that comparatively small element of the whole body of sacred writing in which the human authors simply report the word of God objectively communicated, or, as in some of the prophecies, they wrote by divine dictation. As the general characteristic of all their work, each writer was put to that special part of the general work for which he alone was adapted by his original endowments, education, special information and providential position. Each drew from the stores of his own original information, from the contributions of other men and from all other natural

sources. Each sought knowledge, like all other authors, from the use of his own natural faculties of thought and feeling, of intuition and of logical inference, of memory and imagination, and of religious experience. Each gave evidence of his own special limitations of knowledge and mental power, and of his personal defects as well as of his powers. Each wrote upon a definite occasion, under special historically grouped circumstances, from his own standpoint in the progressively unfolded plan of redemption, and each made his own special contribution to the fabric of God's word.

The divine agency, although originating in a different source, yet emerges into the effect very much through the same channels. The Scriptures have been generated, as the plan of redemption has been evolved, through an historic process. From the beginning God has dealt with man in the concrete, by self-manifestations and transactions. The revelation proceeds from facts to ideas, and has been gradually unfolded as the preparation for the execution of the work of redemption has advanced through its successive stages. The general providence unfolding this plan has always been divine, yet has also been largely natural in its method, while specially directed to its ends, and at the same time surcharged along



portions of its line, especially at the beginning and at great crises, with the supernatural, as a cloud is surcharged with electricity. There were divine voices, appearances, covenants, supernatural communications and interventions—the introduction of new institutions, and their growth under special providential conditions. The prophet of God was sent with special revelations and authority at particular junctures to gather and interpret the lessons of the past, and to add to them lessons springing out of the providential conditions of the present. The Scriptures were generated through sixteen centuries of this divinely-regulated concurrence of God and man, of the natural and the supernatural, of reason and revelation, of providence and grace. They are an organism consisting of many parts, each adjusted to all the rest, as the “many members” to the “one body.” Each sacred writer was by God specially formed, endowed, educated, providentially conditioned, and then supplied with knowledge naturally, supernaturally or spiritually conveyed, so that he, and he alone, could, and freely would, produce his allotted part. Thus God predetermined all the matter and form of the several books largely by the formation and training of the several authors, as an organist determines the character of his music as much



when he builds his organ and when he tunes his pipes as when he plays his keys. Each writer also is put providentially at the very point of view in the general progress of revelation to which his part assigns him. He inherits all the contributions of the past. He is brought into place and set to work at definite providential junctures, the occasion affording him object and motive, giving form to the writing God appoints him to execute.

The Bible, moreover, being a work of the Spirit for spiritual ends, each writer was prepared precisely for his part in the work by the personal dealings of the Holy Spirit with his soul. Spiritual illumination is very different from either revelation or inspiration, and yet it had, under the providence of God, a large share in the genesis of Scripture, contributing to it a portion of that divine element which makes it the word of God. The Psalms are divinely-inspired records of the religious experience of their writers, and are by God himself authoritatively set forth as typical and exemplary for all men for ever. Paul and John and Peter largely drew upon the resources and followed the lines of their own personal religious experience in the intuitional or the logical development of their doctrine; and their experience had, of course,

been previously divinely determined for that very purpose. And in determining their religious experience God so far forth determined their contributions to Scripture. And he furnished each of the sacred writers, in addition to that which came to him through natural channels, all the knowledge needed for his appointed task, either by vision, suggestion, dictation or elevation of faculty, or otherwise, according to his will. The natural knowledge came from all sources, as traditions, documents, testimonies, personal observations and recollections — by means also of intuitions, logical processes of thought, feeling, experience, etc.; and yet all were alike under the general direction of God's providence. The supernatural knowledge became confluent with the natural in a manner which violated no law of reason or of freedom. And throughout the whole of his work the Holy Spirit was present, causing his energies to flow into the spontaneous exercises of the writer's faculties, elevating and directing where need be, and everywhere securing the errorless expression in language of the thought designed by God. This last element is what we call "Inspiration."

In all this process, except in a small element of prophecy, it is evident that as the sacred writers

were free and active in their thinking and in the expression of their thoughts, so they were conscious of what they were doing, of what their words meant, and of the design of their utterance. Yet, even then, it is no less evident that they all, like other free instruments of Providence, "builded better than they knew." The meanings of their words, the bearing of the principles they taught, of the facts they narrated, and the relation of their own part to the great organism of divine revelation, while luminous to their own consciousness, yet reached out into infinitely wider horizons than those penetrated by any thought of theirs.

#### STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE.

During the entire history of Christian theology the word "Inspiration" has been used to express either some or all of the activities of God co-operating with its human authors in the genesis of Holy Scripture. We prefer to use it in the single sense of God's continued work of superintendence, by which, his providential, gracious and supernatural contributions having been presupposed, he presided over the sacred writers in their entire work of writing, with the design and effect of rendering that writing an errorless record of the matters he designed them to com-

municate, and hence constituting the entire volume in all its parts the word of God to us.

While we have restricted the word "Inspiration" to a narrower sphere than that in which it has been used by many in the past, nevertheless we are certain that the above statement of the divine origin and infallibility of Scripture accurately expresses the faith of the Christian Church from the first. Still, several points remain to be more particularly considered, concerning which some difference of opinion at present prevails.

*First.* Is it proper to call this inspiration "plenary"? This word, which has often been made the occasion of strife, is in itself indefinite, and its use contributes nothing either to the precision or the emphasis of the definition. The word means simply "full," "complete," perfectly adequate for the attainment of the end designed, whatever that might have been. There ought not to be on any side any hesitancy to affirm this of the books of the Bible.

*Second.* Can this inspiration be properly said to be "verbal"? The objection to the application of this predicate to inspiration is urged upon three distinct grounds:

(1.) We believe that the great majority of those who object to the affirmation that inspira-

tion is verbal are impelled thereto by a feeling, more or less definite, that the phrase implies that inspiration is, in its essence, a process of verbal dictation, or that, at least in some way, the revelation of the thought or the inspiration of the writer was by means of the control which God exercised over his words. And there is the more excuse for this misapprehension because of the extremely mechanical conceptions of inspiration maintained by many former advocates of the use of this term "verbal." This view, however, we repudiate as earnestly as any of those who object to the language in question. At the present time the advocates of the strictest doctrine of inspiration in insisting that it is verbal do not mean that in any way the thoughts were inspired by means of the words, but simply that the divine superintendence, which we call inspiration, extended to the verbal expression of the thoughts of the sacred writers, as well as to the thoughts themselves, and that hence the Bible, considered as a record, an utterance in words of a divine revelation, is the word of God to us. Hence, in all the affirmations of Scripture of every kind there is no more error in the words of the original autographs than in the thoughts they were chosen to express. The thoughts and words are both alike human, and therefore subject to hu-

man limitations, but the divine superintendence and guarantee extend to the one as much as the other.

(2.) There are others who, while insisting as strongly as any upon the presence of the divine element in Scripture, developed through special providences and gracious dealings, religious experiences and mental processes, in the very manner we have just set forth under the head of the "Genesis of Scripture," yet substantially deny what we have here called "inspiration." They retain the word "inspiration," but signify by it ✓ the divine element in the revelation, or providential or gracious dealing aforesaid, and they believe that the sacred writers, having been divinely helped to certain knowledge, were left to the natural limitations and fallibility incidental to their human and personal characters, alike in their thinking out their several narrations and expositions of divine truth, and in their reduction of them to writing. This view gives up the whole matter of the immediate divine authorship of ✓ the Bible as the word of God, and its infallibility and authority as a rule of faith and practice. We have only the several versions of God's revelations as rendered mentally and verbally, more or less adequately, yet always imperfectly, by the different sacred writers. This class of

objectors are, of course, self-consistent in rejecting verbal inspiration in any sense. But this view is not consistent either with the claims of Scripture, the consciousness of Christians or the historic doctrine of the Church.

(3.) There are others who maintain that the Scriptures have been certainly inspired so far forth as to constitute them in all their parts, and as a whole, an infallible and divinely-authoritative rule of faith and practice, and yet hold that, while the thoughts of the sacred writers concerning doctrine and duty were inspired and errorless, their language was of purely human suggestion, and more or less accurate. The question as to whether the elements of Scripture relating to the course of Nature and to the events of history are without error will be considered below: it is sufficient to say under the present head that it is self-evident that, just as far as the thoughts of Scripture relating to any element or topic whatsoever are inspired, the words in which those thoughts are expressed must be inspired also. Every element of Scripture, whether doctrine or history, of which God has guaranteed the infallibility, must be infallible in its verbal expression. No matter how in other respects generated, the Scriptures are a product of human thought, and every process of human thought



involves language. "The slightest consideration will show that words are as essential to intellectual processes as they are to mutual intercourse. . . . Thoughts are wedded to words as necessarily as soul to body. Without it the mysteries unveiled before the eyes of the seer would be confused shadows; with it, they are made clear lessons for human life." \*

Besides this, the Scriptures are a *record* of divine revelations, and as such consist of words; and as far as the record is inspired at all, and as far as it is in any element infallible, its inspiration must reach to its words. Infallible thought must be definite thought, and definite thought implies words. But if God could have rendered the thoughts of the apostles regarding doctrine and duty infallibly correct without words, and then left them to convey it to us in their own language, we should be left to precisely that amount of certainty for the foundation of our faith as is guaranteed by the natural competency of the human authors, and neither more nor less. There would be no divine guarantee whatever. The human medium would everywhere interpose its fallibility between God and us. Besides, most believers admit that some of

\* Canon Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, 5th edition: Introduction, pp. 14, 15.



the prophetic parts of Scripture were verbally dictated. It was, moreover, promised that the apostles should speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. "The word of God came unto the prophet." The Church has always held, as expressed by the Helvetic Confession, II., "that the canonical Scriptures *are the word of God.*" Paul claims that the Holy Spirit superintended and guaranteed his words as well as his thoughts (1 Cor. ii. 13). The things of the Spirit we teach "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (*συγχρητοῦντες*), combining spiritual things with spiritual—i. e. spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

It is evident, therefore, that it is not clearness of thought which inclines any of the advocates of a real inspiration of the Holy Scriptures to deny that it extends to the words. Whatever discrepancies or other human limitations may attach to the sacred record, *the line* (of inspired or not inspired, of infallible or fallible) *can never rationally be drawn between the thoughts and the words of Scripture.*

*Third.* It is asked again: In what way, and to what extent, is the doctrine of inspiration dependent upon the supposed results of modern criticism as to the dates, authors, sources and modes of composition of the several books? To

us the following answer appears to be well founded, and to set the limits within which the Church doctrine of inspiration is in equilibrium with the results of modern criticism fairly and certainly :

The doctrine of inspiration, in its essence—and, consequently, in all its forms—presupposes a supernatural revelation and a supernatural providential guidance entering into and determining the genesis of Scripture from the beginning. Every naturalistic theory, therefore, of the evolution of Scripture, however disguised, is necessarily opposed to any true version of the catholic doctrine of inspiration. It is also a well-known matter of fact that Christ himself is the ultimate witness on whose testimony the Scriptures, as well as their doctrinal contents, rest. We receive the Old Testament just as Christ handed it to us, and on his authority. And we receive as belonging to the New Testament all, and only those, books which an apostolically-instructed age testifies to have been produced by the apostles or their companions—*i. e.* by the men whom Christ commissioned, and to whom he promised infallibility in teaching. It is evident, therefore, that every supposed conclusion of critical investigation which denies the apostolical origin of a New-Testament book or the truth of any part of Christ's testimony in

relation to the Old Testament and its contents, or which is inconsistent with the absolute truthfulness of any affirmation of any book so authenticated, must be inconsistent with the true doctrine of inspiration. On the other hand, the defenders of the strictest doctrine of inspiration should cheerfully acknowledge that theories as to the authors, dates, sources and modes of composition of the several books which are not plainly inconsistent with the testimony of Christ or his apostles as to the Old Testament, or with the apostolic origin of the books of the New Testament, or with the absolute truthfulness of any of the affirmations of these books so authenticated, cannot in the least invalidate the evidence or pervert the meaning of the historical doctrine of inspiration.

*Fourth.* The real point at issue between the more strict and the more lax views of inspiration maintained by believing scholars remains to be stated. It is claimed, and admitted equally on both sides, that the great design and effect of inspiration is to render the Sacred Scriptures in all their parts a divinely infallible and authoritative rule of faith and practice, and hence that in all their elements of thought and expression, concerned in the great purpose of conveying to men a revelation of spiritual doctrine or duty, the

Scriptures are absolutely infallible. But if this be so, it is argued by the more liberal school of Christian scholars that this admitted fact is not inconsistent with other facts which they claim are matters of their personal observation: to wit, that in certain elements of Scripture which are purely incidental to their great end of teaching spiritual truth, such as history, natural history, ethnology, archæology, geography, natural science and philosophy, they, like all the best human writings of their age, are, while for the most part reliable, yet limited by inaccuracies and discrepancies. While this is maintained, it is generally at the same time affirmed that when compared with other books of the same antiquity these inaccuracies and discrepancies of the Bible are inconsiderable in number, and always of secondary importance, in no degree invalidating the great attribute of Scripture—its absolute infallibility and its divine authority as a rule of faith and practice.

The writers of this article are sincerely convinced of the perfect soundness of the great catholic doctrine of biblical inspiration—*i. e.* that the Scriptures not only contain, but ARE, THE WORD OF GOD, and hence that all their elements and all their affirmations are absolutely errorless, and binding the faith and obedience of

men. Nevertheless, we admit that the question between ourselves and the advocates of the view just stated is one of fact, to be decided only by an exhaustive and impartial examination of all the sources of evidence—*i. e.* the claims and the phenomena of the Scriptures themselves. There will undoubtedly be found upon the surface many apparent affirmations presumably inconsistent with the present teachings of science, with facts of history or with other statements of the sacred books themselves. Such apparent inconsistencies and collisions with other sources of information are to be expected in imperfect copies of ancient writings, from the fact that the original reading may have been lost, or that we may fail to realize the point of view of the author, or that we are destitute of the circumstantial knowledge which would fill up and harmonize the record. Besides, the human forms of knowledge by which the critics test the accuracy of Scripture are themselves subject to error. In view of all the facts known to us, we affirm that a candid inspection of all the ascertained phenomena of the original text of Scripture will leave unmodified the ancient faith of the Church. In all their real affirmations these books are without error.

It must be remembered that it is not claimed that the Scriptures, any more than their authors,

are omniscient. The information they convey is in the forms of human thought, and limited on all sides. They were not designed to teach philosophy, science or human history as such. They were not designed to furnish an infallible system of speculative theology. They are written in human languages, whose words, inflections, constructions and idioms bear everywhere indelible traces of human error. The record itself furnishes evidence that the writers were in large measure dependent for their knowledge upon sources and methods in themselves fallible, and that their personal knowledge and judgments were in many matters hesitating and defective, or even wrong. Nevertheless, the historical faith of the Church has always been that all the affirmations of Scripture of all kinds, whether of spiritual doctrine or duty, or of physical or historical fact, or of psychological or philosophical principle, are without any error when the *ipsissima verba* of the original autographs are ascertained and interpreted in their natural and intended sense. There is a vast difference between exactness of statement, which includes an exhaustive rendering of details, an absolute literalness, which the Scriptures never profess, and accuracy, on the other hand, which secures a correct statement of facts or principles in-

tended to be affirmed. It is this accuracy, and this alone, as distinct from exactness, which the Church doctrine maintains of every affirmation in the original text of Scripture without exception. Every statement accurately corresponds to truth just as far forth as affirmed.

#### PROOF OF THE DOCTRINE.

We of course do not propose to exhibit this evidence in this article. We wish merely to refresh the memory of our readers with respect to its copiousness, variety and cogency.

*First.* The New-Testament writers continually assert of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and of the several books which constitute it, that they ARE THE WORD OF GOD. What their writers said God said, Christ sent out the apostles with the promise of the Holy Ghost, and declared that in hearing them men would hear him. The apostles themselves claimed to speak as the prophets of God, and with plenary authority in his name binding all consciences. And while they did so God endorsed their teaching *and their claims* with signs and wonders and divers miracles. These claims are a universal and inseparable characteristic of every part of Scripture.

*Second.* Although composed by different hu-



man authors on various subjects and occasions, under all possible varieties of providential conditions, in two languages, through sixteen centuries of time, yet they evidently constitute one system, all their parts minutely correlated, the whole unfolding a single purpose, and thus giving indubitable evidence of the controlling presence of a divine intelligence from first to last.

*Third.* It is true that the Scriptures were not designed to teach philosophy, science or ethnology, or human history as such, and therefore they are not to be studied primarily as sources of information on these subjects. Yet all these elements are unavoidably incidentally involved in the statements of Scripture. Many of these, because of defective knowledge or interpretation upon our part, present points of apparent confusion or error. Yet the outstanding fact is, that the general conformableness of the sacred books to modern knowledge in all these departments is purely miraculous. If these books, which originated in an obscure province of the ancient world, be compared with the most enlightened cosmogonies or philosophies or histories of the same or immediately subsequent centuries, their comparative freedom even from apparent error is amazing. Who prevented the sacred writers from falling into the wholesale and radical mis-



takes which were necessarily incidental to their position as mere men? The fact that at this date scientists of the rank of Faraday and Henry, of Dana, of Guyot and Dawson, maintain that there is no real conflict between the really ascertained facts of science and the first two chapters of Genesis, rightly interpreted, of itself demonstrates that a supernatural intelligence must have directed the writing of those chapters. This, of course, proves that the scientific element of Scripture, as well as the doctrinal, was within the scope of inspiration. And this argument is every day acquiring greater force from the results of the critical study of Scripture, and from advanced knowledge in every department of history and science, which continually tend to solve difficulties and to lessen the number of apparent discrepancies.

*Fourth.* The moral and spiritual character of the revelation which the Scriptures convey of God, of the person of Christ, of the plan of redemption and of the law of absolute righteousness, and the power which the very words of the record, as well as the truths they express, have exercised over the noblest men and over nations and races for centuries,—this is the characteristic self-demonstration of the word of God, and has sufficed to maintain the unabated catholicity of

the strict doctrine of inspiration through all change of time and in spite of all opposition.

*Fifth.* This doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, in all its elements and parts, has always been the doctrine of the Church. Dr. Westcott has proved this by a copious catena of quotations from Ante-Nicene Fathers in Appendix B to his *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*. He quotes Clemens Romanus as saying that the Scriptures are "the true utterances of the Holy Ghost." He quotes Tertullian as saying that these books are "the writings and the words of God," and Cyprian as saying that the "gospel cannot stand in part and fall in part," and Clement of Alexandria to the effect that the foundations of our faith "we have received from God through the Scriptures," of which not one tittle shall pass away without being accomplished, "for the mouth of the Lord the Holy Spirit spake it." Dr. Westcott quotes Origen as teaching that the Scriptures are without error, since "they were accurately written by the co-operation of the Holy Ghost," and that the words of Paul are the words of God.

The Roman Church (Can. Conc. Trid., Sess. IV.) says, "God is the author of both" Testaments. The second Helvetic Confession represents the whole Protestant Reformation in saying

(Ch. I.): "The canonical Scriptures are the true word of God," for "God continues to speak to us through the Holy Scriptures." The Westminster Confession says: "It pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself and to declare his will unto his Church, and afterward . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing." It declares that the Scriptures are in such a sense given by inspiration that they possess a divine authority, and that "God is their author," and they "are the WORD OF GOD."

It is not questionable that the great historic churches have held these creed definitions in the sense of affirming the errorless infallibility of the Word. This is everywhere shown by the way in which all the great bodies of Protestant theologians have handled Scripture in their commentaries, systems of theology, catechisms and sermons. And this has always been pre-eminently characteristic of epochs and agents of reformation and revival. All the great world-moving men, as Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Whitefield and Chalmers, and proportionately those most like them, have so handled the divine Word. Even if the more lax doctrine has the suffrage of many scholars, or even if it be true, it is nevertheless certain that hitherto in nine-

teen centuries it has never been held by men who also possessed the secret of using the word of God like a hammer or like a fire.

#### LEGITIMATE PRESUMPTIONS.

In testing this question by a critical investigation of the phenomena of Scripture, it is evident that the stricter view, which denies the existence of errors, discrepancies or inaccurate statements in Scripture, has the presumption in its favor, and that the *onus probandi* rests upon the advocates of the other view. The latter may fairly be required to furnish positive and conclusive evidence in each alleged instance of error until the presumption has been turned over to the other side. The *prima facie* evidence of the claims of Scripture is assuredly all in favor of an errorless infallibility of all scriptural affirmations. This has been from the first the general faith of the historical Church and of the Bible-loving, spiritual people of God. The very letter of the Word has been proved from ancient times to be a tremendous power in human life.

It is a question also of infinite importance. If the new views are untrue, they threaten not only to shake the confidence of men in the Scriptures, but the very Scriptures themselves

as an objective ground of faith. We have seen that the Holy Spirit has, as a matter of fact, preserved the sacred writers to a degree unparalleled elsewhere in literature from error in the departments of philosophy and science. Who then shall determine the limit of that preserving influence? We have seen that in God's plan doctrine grows out of history, and that redemption itself was wrought out in human history. If, then, the inspiration of the sacred writers did not embrace the department of history, or only of sacred and not of profane history, who shall set the limit and define what is of the essence of faith and what the uncertain accident? It would assuredly appear that, as no organism can be stronger than its weakest part, if error be found in any one element or in any class of statements, certainty as to any portion could rise no higher than belongs to that exercise of human reason to which it will be left to discriminate the infallible from the fallible.

The critical investigation must be made, and we must abide by the result when it is unquestionably reached. But surely it must be carried on with infinite humility and teachableness, and with prayer for the constant guidance of the gracious Spirit. The signs of success will never be presumption, an evident sense of intel-

lectual superiority, or a want of sympathy with the spiritual Church of all ages or with the painful confusion of God's humble people of the present.

With these presumptions and in this spirit let it (1) be proved that each alleged discrepant statement certainly occurred in the original autograph of the sacred book in which it is said to be found. (2) Let it be proved that the interpretation which occasions the apparent discrepancy is the one which the passage was evidently intended to bear. It is not sufficient to show a difficulty, which may spring out of our defective knowledge of the circumstances. The true meaning must be definitely and certainly ascertained, and then shown to be irreconcilable with other known truth. (3) Let it be proved that the true sense of some part of the original autograph is directly and necessarily inconsistent with some certainly-known fact of history or truth of science, or some other statement of Scripture certainly ascertained and interpreted. We believe that it can be shown that this has never yet been successfully done in the case of one single alleged instance of error in the WORD OF GOD.

## CRITICAL OBJECTIONS TRIED.

It remains only to consider more in detail some of the special objections which have been put forward against this doctrine in the name of criticism. It cannot be, indeed, demanded that every one urged should be examined and met, but it may be justly expected that the chief classes of relevant objections should be briefly touched upon. This, fortunately, is no illimitable task. There are, as already stated, two main presuppositions lying at the base of the doctrine, essential to its integrity, while to them it adds one essential supposition. The presuppositions are—1. The possibility of supernatural interference, and the actual occurrence of that interference in the origin of our Bible; and, 2. The authenticity, genuineness and historical credibility of the records included in our Bible. The added supposition is—3. The truth to fact of every statement in the Scriptures. No objection from the side of criticism is relevant unless it traverses some one of these three points. The traditional view of the age and authorship of a document or of the meaning of a statement may be traversed, and yet no conflict arise with the doctrine of a strict inspiration. But criticism cannot reach results incon-

sistent with the genuineness and authenticity of a document judged according to the professions of that document or the statements or implications of any other part of Scripture, or incompatible with the truth of any passage in the sense of that passage arrived at by the correct application of the sound principles of historico-grammatical exegesis, without thereby arraying herself in direct opposition to the Church doctrine of inspiration. All objections to that doctrine based on such asserted results of criticism are undoubtedly relevant. Our duty is, therefore, to ask what results of criticism are claimed which traverse some one of the three assertions—of a supernatural origin for the Scriptures, of genuineness and authenticity for its books, and of absolute freedom from error of its statements.

I. THE AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE  
BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTA-  
MENTS, AS THEY HAVE COME DOWN TO US.

The first point for us to examine would naturally be the bearing upon the Church doctrine of inspiration of the various modern critical theories concerning the origin and present integrity of the several books of the Old and New Testaments. This is at present the most moment



ous question which agitates the believing world. The critical examination of all the most intimate phenomena of the text of Scripture is an obvious duty, and its results, when humility, docility and spiritual insight are added to competent learning and broad intelligence, must be eminently beneficial. It is obvious, however, that this department of the subject could not be adequately discussed in this paper. It is consequently postponed to the near future, when it is intended that the whole subject shall be presented as fully as possible.

In the mean time, the present writers, while they admit freely that the traditional belief as to the dates and origin of the several books may be brought into question without involving any doubt as to their inspiration, yet confidently affirm that any theories of the origin or authorship of any book of either Testament which ascribe to them a purely naturalistic genesis, or dates or authors inconsistent with either their own natural claims or the assertions of other Scripture, are plainly inconsistent with the doctrine of inspiration taught by the Church. Nor have they any embarrassment in the face of these theories, seeing that they believe them to rest on no better basis than an over-acute criticism overreaching itself and building on

fancies. Here they must content themselves with reference to the various critical discussions of these theories which have poured from the press for detailed refutation of them. With this refutation in mind they simply assert their conviction that none of the claims or assertions of the Scriptures as to the authenticity of a single book of either Testament has hitherto been disproved.

## II. DETAILED ACCURACY OF STATEMENT.

We are next confronted with objections meant to traverse the third of our preliminary statements, "consisting of bold assertions that, whatever may have been their origin, our Scriptures do exhibit phenomena of inaccuracy, that mistakes are found in them, errors committed by them, untrue statements ventured. Nor is this charge put forward only by opponents of revelation: a Van Oosterzee, as well as "a Tholuck, a Neander, a Lange, a Stier," admits "errors and inaccuracies in matters of subordinate importance." \* It is plain, however, that if the Scriptures do fail in truth in their statements of whatever kind, the doctrine of inspiration which has been defended in this paper cannot stand. But so long as the principles of historico-

\* See Van Oosterzee's *Dogmatics*, p. 205.

grammatical exegesis are relied on to determine the meaning of Scripture, it is impossible to escape the fact that the Bible claims to be thus inspired. And thus it is not a rare thing to find the very theologians who themselves cannot believe in a strict inspiration yet admitting that the Scripture writers believed in it.\* We cannot, therefore, occupy the ground on which these great and worthy men seem to us so precariously to stand. A proved error in Scripture contradicts not only our doctrine, but the Scripture claims, and therefore its inspiration in making those claims. It is therefore of vital importance to ask, Can phenomena of error and untruth be pointed out?

There is certainly no dearth of "instances"

\* Thus Tholuck: "Yet his [the author of Hebrews] application of the Old Testament rests on the strictest view of inspiration, since passages where God is not the speaker are cited as words of God or of the Holy Ghost (i. 6, 7, 8; iv. 4, 7; vii. 21; iii. 7; x. 15)."—*Old Testament in the New*, in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, xi. p. 612. So also Richard Rothe: "It is clear, then, that the orthodox theory [*i. e.* the very strictest] of inspiration is countenanced by the authors of the New Testament." So also Canon Farrar: "He [Paul] shared, doubtless, in the views of the later Jewish schools—the Tanaim and Amoraim—on the nature of inspiration. These views . . . made the words of Scripture coextensive and identical with the words of God."—*Life of Paul*, ii. p. 47.

confidently put forward. But it is abundantly plain that the vast majority of them are irrelevant. We must begin any discussion of them, therefore, by reasserting certain simple propositions, the result of which will be to clear the ground of all irrelevant objections. It is to be remembered, then, that—1. We do not assert that the common text, but only that the original autographic text, was inspired. No “error” can be asserted, therefore, which cannot be proved to have been aboriginal in the text. 2. We do not deny an everywhere-present human element in the Scriptures. No mark of the effect of this human element, therefore—in style of thought or wording—can be urged against inspiration unless it can be shown to result in untruth. 3. We do not erect inspiration into an end, but hold it to be simply a means to an end—viz. the accurate conveyance of truth. No objection, therefore, is valid against the form in which the truth is expressed, so long as it is admitted that that form conveys the truth. 4. We do not suppose that inspiration made a writer false to his professed purpose, but rather that it kept him infallibly true to it. No objection is valid, therefore, which overlooks the prime question: What was the professed or implied purpose of the writer in making this statement? These few

simple and very obvious remarks set aside the vast majority of the customary objections. The first throws out of court numbers of inaccuracies in the Old and New Testaments as either certainly or probably not parts of the original text, and therefore not fit evidence in the case. The second performs the same service for a still greater number, which amount simply to the discovery of individual traits, modes of thought or expression, or forms of argumentation in the writings of the several authors of the biblical books. The third sets aside a vast multitude, drawn from pressure of language, misreading of figures, resurrection of the primary sense of idioms, etc., in utter forgetfulness of the fact that no one claims that inspiration secured the use of good Greek in Attic severity of taste, free from the exaggerations and looseness of current speech, but only that it secured the accurate expression of truth, even (if you will) through the medium of the worst Greek a fisherman of Galilee could write and the most startling figures of speech a peasant could invent. Exegesis must be historical as well as grammatical, and must always seek the meaning *intended*, not any meaning that can be tortured out of a passage. The fourth in like manner destroys the force of every objection which is tacitly founded on the idea that partial

and incomplete statements cannot be inspired, no documents can be quoted except *verbatim*, no conversations reported unless at length, etc., and which thus denies the right of another to speak to the present purpose only, appeal to the sense, not wording of a document, give abstracts of discourses, and apply, by a true exegesis, the words of a previous writer to the present need. The sum of the whole matter is simply this: No phenomenon can be validly urged against verbal inspiration which, found out of Scripture, would not be a valid argument against the truth of the writing. Inspiration securing no more than this—*truth*, simple truth—no phenomenon can be urged against verbal inspiration which cannot be proved to involve *an indisputable error*.

It is not to be denied that such phenomena are asserted to be discoverable in the Scriptures. Is the assertion capable of being supported by facts? That is the only question now before us. And it thus becomes our duty to examine some samples of the chief classes of facts usually appealed to. These samples—which will, moreover, all be chosen from the New Testament, and all at the suggestion of opponents—must serve our present needs.

## HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL ACCURACY.

1. It is asserted that the Scripture writers are inaccurate in their statements of historical and geographical facts, as exhibited by the divergence existing between their statements and the information we derive from other sources, such as profane writers and monuments. When we ask for the proofs of this assertion, however, they are found to be very difficult to produce. A generation or two ago this was not so much the case; but the progress of our knowledge of the times and the geography of the region in which our sacred books were written has been gradually wiping out the "proofs" one by one, until they are at this day non-existent. The chief (and almost the only) historical errors still asserted to exist in the New Testament are—the "fifteenth year of Tiberius" of Luke iii. 1; the enrollment during Cyrenius's governorship of Luke ii. 2; and the revolt of Theudas of Acts v. 36. It is not denied that these statements present difficulties, but it is humbly suggested that that is hardly synonymous with saying that they are proved mistakes. *If* Herod died in the spring of A. U. C. 750 (which seems wellnigh certain), and *if*, in Luke iii. 23, the "about" be deemed not broad enough to cover two years (which is



fairly probable), and *if* Luke iii. 1 means to date John's first appearance (as again seems probable), and *if* no more than six months intervened between John's and Jesus' public appearance (which, still again, seems probable),—then it is admitted that the "fifteenth year of Tiberius" must be a mistake—*provided that, still further*, we must count his years from the beginning of his sole reign, and not from his co-regnancy with Augustus; in favor of which latter mode of counting much has been, and more can be, urged. Surely this is not a very clear case of indubitable error, with its *five ifs* staring us in the face. Again, *if* the Theudas mentioned in Acts is necessarily the same as the Theudas mentioned by Josephus, then Luke and Josephus do seem to be in disaccord as to the time of his revolt; and *if* Josephus can be shown to be, in general, a more accurate historian than Luke, then his account must be preferred. But neither of these *ifs* is true. Josephus is the less accurate historian, as is easily proved; and there are good reasons—convincing to a critic like Winer and a Jew like Jost, neither certainly affected by apologetical bias—to suppose that Acts and Josephus mention different revolts. Where, then, is the contradiction?

The greatest reliance is, however, placed on the



third case adduced—the statement of Luke that Jesus was born at the time of a world-enrollment which was carried out in Syria during the governorship of Cyrenius.† Weiss\* offers three reasons why Luke is certainly incorrect here, which Schurer† increases to five facts—viz.: 1. History knows nothing of a general empire-census in the time of Augustus; 2. A Roman census would not force Joseph to go to Bethlehem, nor Mary to go with him; 3. Nor could it have taken place in Palestine in the time of Herod; 4. Josephus knows nothing of such a census, but, on the contrary, speaks of that of Acts v. 37 as something new and unheard of; and, 5. Quirinius was not governor of Syria during Herod's life. This has a formidable look, but each detail has been more than fully met. Thus, Objection 1 turns wholly upon an *argumentum e silentio*, always precarious enough, and here quadruply so, seeing that (1) an empire-census is just such a thing as Roman historians would be likely to omit all mention of, just as Spatian fails to mention in his life of Hadrian the famous rescript of that monarch, and all contemporary history is silent as to Augustus's geometrical survey; (2) We have no detailed

\* Meyer's *Markus und Lukas*, p. 286 (ed. 6).

† *N. T. Zeitgeschichte*, pp. 263–286.

contemporary history of this time, the inaccurate and gossiping Suetonius and Josephus being our only sources of information; (3) Certain oft-quoted passages in Tacitus and Suetonius acquaint us with facts which absolutely require such a census at their base; and (4) We have direct, though not contemporary, historical proof that such a census was taken, in statements of Cassiodorus and Suidas. Objection 2 gains all its apparent force from a *confusio verborum*. Luke does not represent this as a Roman census in the sense that it was taken up after Roman methods, but only in the sense that it was ordered ultimately by Roman authority. Nor does he represent Mary as being forced to go to Bethlehem with Joseph; her own choice, doubtless, determined her journey. The same *confusio verborum* follows us into Objection 3. It may be improbable that Herod should have been so far set aside that a census should have been taken up in his dominions after Roman methods and by Roman officials; but is it so improbable that he should be ordered to take himself a census after his own methods and by his own officials? Josephus can give us the answer.\* Whatever may have been Herod's official title, whether *rex*

\* Cf. *Ant.*, xv. 10, 4; xvi. 2, 5; 4, 1; 9, 3; xvii. 2, 1; 2, 4; 5, 8; 11, 4, etc., for Herod's status.

*socius* or, as seems more probable (one stage lower), *rex amicus Cæsaris*, it is certain that he felt bound to bow to the emperor's every whisper; so that if Augustus desired statistics as to the *regna* (and Tacitus proves he did), Herod would be forced to furnish them for his *regnum*. Objection 4 again is easily laid: Josephus not only mentions nothing he could escape which exhibited Jewish subjection, but actually passes over the decade 750-760 so slightly that he can hardly be said to have left us a history of that time. That he speaks of the later census of Acts v. 37 as something new is most natural, seeing that it was, as carried on by the Roman officials and after Roman methods, not only absolutely new, and a most important event in itself, but, moreover, was fraught with such historical consequences that it could not be passed over in silence. Objection 5 is the most important and difficult, but not, therefore, insuperable. It states, indeed, a truth: Quirinius was not governor of Syria until after Herod's death. But it must be noted, on the one hand, that Zumpt has proved, almost, if not quite, to demonstration, that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria, the first time beginning within six months after Herod's death; and, on the other, that Luke does not say that Christ was born while Cyre-

nius was governor of Syria. What Luke says is, that Christ was born during the progress of a census, and then defines the census as the first which was carried on when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. If this census was begun under Varus and finished under Quirinius, Christ may have been born, according to Luke, at any time during the progress of this census. This, because Luke ii. 2 is not given to define the time of Christ's birth, but more narrowly to describe what census it was which had in verse 1 been used to define the time of Christ's birth.\* Thus, doubtless, it is true that Christ was born under Varus, and yet during the course of the first Quirinian census; and thus Schürer's fifth objection goes the way of all the others.

The wonderful accuracy of the New-Testa-

\* Take an example: If one should say of any event, that it occurred during our war with Great Britain, and then add, "I mean that war wherein Jackson fought," would he necessarily refer to an event *late* in the war, after Jackson came to the front? Not so, because *the war alone* defines the time of the event, and Jackson only *which* war. So in Luke *the census alone* defines the time of Christ's birth, and Quirinius only *which* census. It ought to be added that there are at least three other methods of explaining Luke's words, all possible, and none very improbable, on the supposition of any one of which conflict with history is impossible.

ment writers in all, even the minute and incidental, details of their historical notices cannot, however, be made even faintly apparent by a simple answering of objections. Some sort of glance over the field as a whole is necessary to any appreciation of it. There occur in the New Testament some thirty names—emperors, members of the family of Herod, high priests, rabbis, Roman governors, princes, Jewish leaders—some mention of which might be looked for in contemporary history or on contemporary monuments.\* All but two of these—and they the insignificant Jewish rebels Theudas and Barabbas—are actually mentioned; and the New-Testament notices are found, on comparison, to be absolutely accurate in every, even the most minute, detail. Every one of their statements has not, indeed, passed without challenge,

\* These are: Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius—Herod Antipas, the two Philips, Archelaus, Agrippa I., Agrippa II., Herodias, Herodias' daughter, Bernice, Drusilla—Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias—Gamaliel—Quirinius, Pilate, Felix, Festus, Gallio, Sergius Paulus—Aretas (Candace), Lysanias—[Theudas], Judas of Galilee [Barabbas]. Candace seems to represent a hereditary title, not a personal name; Theudas and Barabbas are not named in profane sources. Cf. the (incomplete) list and fine remarks of Rawlinson (*Hist. Evidences*, Boston, 1873, p. 195 sq.).

but challenge has always meant triumphant vindication. Some examples of what is here meant have been given already; others may be added in a note for their instructiveness.\* Now, the period of which these writers treat is absolutely the most difficult historical period in which to be accurate that the world has ever seen. Nothing was fixed or stable; vacillation, change, was everywhere. The province which was senatorial to-day was imperial to-morrow—the boundaries that were fixed to-day were altered to-morrow. That these writers were thus accurate in a period and land wherein Tacitus failed to attain complete accuracy means much.

We reach the same conclusion if we ask after

\* It was long boldly asserted that Luke was in error in making Lysanias a contemporary tetrarch with the Herodian rulers. But it is now admitted that Josephus mentions an earlier and a later Lysanias, and so corroborates Luke; and inscriptions also have been brought forward which supervindicate Luke's accuracy, so that even M. Renan admits it. Again, it was long contended that Luke had inaccurately assigned a proconsul to Cyprus; but this was soon set aside by a reference to Cyprian coins of Claudius's time and to Dion Cassius, liv. 4; and now Mr. Cesnola publishes an inscription which mentions the veritable proconsul Paulus whom Luke mentioned (*Cyprus*, p. 425). So with reference to the titles of the rulers of Achaia, Philippi, Ephesus, etc. (See in general Lee on *Inspiration*, p. 364, note 2.)

their geographical accuracy. In no single case have they slipped here, either; and what this means may be estimated by noting what a mass of geographical detail has been given us.\* Between forty and fifty names of countries can be counted in the New-Testament pages; every one is accurately named and placed. About the same number of foreign cities are named, and all equally accurately. Still more to the purpose, thirty-six Syrian and Palestinian towns are named, the great majority of which have been identified,† and wherever testing is possible

\* Compare the efforts of a real forger with the accuracy of these autoptic writers—*e. g.* of Prochorus, as given in Zahn's *Acta Joannis*, p. lii. Only nine real places can be found in a long list of geographical names invented for the need. Thus, to the little Patmos a number of cities and villages is ascribed which would require a Sicily or Cyprus to furnish ground to stand on.

† These names are: \*Ænon, \*Antipatris, †Arimathea, \*Azotus, \*Bethany, †Bethany beyond Jordan, \*Bethlehem, †Bethphage, †Bethsaida, †Cana, †Capernaum, \*Cæsarea, \*Cæsarea Philippi, \*Chorazin, †Dalmanutha, \*Damasculus, †Emmaus, \*Ephraim, \*Gadara, \*Gaza, †Gerasa, \*Jericho, \*Jerusalem, \*Joppa, †Jouda, †Kerioth, \*Lydda, \*Magdala, \*Nain, \*Nazareth, \*Salim, \*Seleucia, \*Sychar, \*Tiberias, \*Tyre. Those marked \* are pretty certainly identified; those †, with great probability; those †, with a choice between the two places; and those †, as to their neighborhood. There are, besides, some names



the most minute accuracy emerges. Whether due to inspiration or not, this unvarying accuracy of statement is certainly consistent with the strictest doctrine of inspiration.

#### COMPLETE INTERNAL HARMONY.

2. Another favorite charge made against these writers is, that they are often hopelessly inconsistent with one another in their statements; and this charge of disharmony has sometimes been pushed so far as to make it do duty even against their historical credibility. But when we begin to examine the instances brought forward in support of it, they are found to be cases of *difficult*, not of *impossible*, harmony. And it is abundantly plain that it must be shown to be *impossible* to harmonize any two statements on any natural supposition before they can be asserted to be inconsistent. This is a recognized principle of historical investigation, and it is the only reasonable principle possible, unless we are prepared to assert that the two statements necessarily contain all the facts of the case and exclude the possibility of the har-

quoted from the Old Testament—*e. g.* ||Gomorra<sup>h</sup>, \*Rama, \*Sarepta, \*Shechem, ||Sodom. Also some other geographical names—*e. g.* \*The brook Kedron, \*Jordan, \*the Mount of Olives and \*the Sea of Galilee, etc.



monizing supposition. Having our eyes upon this principle, it is not rash to declare that no disharmony has ever been proved between any two statements of the New Testament. The best examples to illustrate the character of the attempts made to exhibit disharmony, and the rocks on which these attempts always break, are probably those five striking cases on which Dr. Fisher most wisely rests his charge against the complete harmony of the four evangelists—viz. the alleged disharmony in the accounts of the place and phraseology of the Sermon on the Mount, the healing of the centurion's son, the denials of Peter, the healing of the blind man at Jericho, and the time of the institution of the Lord's Supper.\* But that in each of these most natural means of harmonizing exist, and are even in some instances recognized as possible by Dr. Fisher himself, President Bartlett has lately so fully shown in detail† that we cannot bring ourselves to repeat here the oft-told tale. Take one or two other examples: for instance, look at that famous case alleged in the specification of the *hour* in John xix. 14 and Mark xv. 25. The difficulty here, says Dean Alford, is insuperable, and with him Meyer *et al.* agree.

\* *Beginnings of Christianity*, p. 460 sq.

† *Princeton Review*, January, 1880, p. 47 sq.

But even Strauss admits that it would<sup>1</sup> be cancelled "if it were possible to prove that the Fourth Gospel proceeds upon another mode of reckoning time than that used by the Synoptics." And that it is possible to prove this very thing any one can satisfy himself by noting the four places where John mentions the hour (i. 39; iv. 6, 52; xix. 14); whence it emerges that John reckons his hours according to the method prevalent in Asia Minor\*—from midnight, and not from daybreak. Thus all difficulty vanishes.† The disharmony claimed to exist between Matt. xxvii. 6-8 and Acts i. 18, 19 is also voided by a naïve kind of admission; Dean Alford, for instance, asserting in one breath that no reconciliation can be found consistent with common honesty, and in the next admitting that the natural supposition by which the passages are harmonized is "of course possible." This admission, on the recognized principles of historical criticism, amounts simply to a confession that

\* That this was the custom in Asia Minor is evident from *Marturium Polyc.*, c. 21, etc. Cf. also (in general) Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, ii. 77, and Plutarch, *Quæst Rom.*, lxxxiii.

† Cf. Townson's *Discourses*, Discourse 8; McClelland's *N. T.*, vol. i., p. 737 sq.; Westcott on *John*, p. 282; Lee on *Inspiration*, p. 352; where this subject is fully discussed.

no disharmony ought to be asserted in the case.

Perhaps, however, the two most important and far-reaching instances of disharmony alleged of late years are—that asserted between the narratives of the events preceding, accompanying and following the birth of our Lord given by Matthew and Luke, which is said to prove the historical untrustworthiness of *both* (!) narratives; and that asserted between the accounts of Paul's visits to Jerusalem and his relations to the Twelve in Acts and Galatians, which is said to prove the unhistorical character of Acts. In the brief space at our disposal it is not possible to disprove such wholesale charges in detail. It must suffice, therefore, to point out the lines on which such a refutation proceeds. In the first instance the charge can be upheld only by the expedient of assuming that silence as to an event constitutes denial of that event, supported by criticisms which tacitly deny a historian's right to give summary accounts of transactions or choose his incidents according to his purpose in writing. Any careful examination of the passages involved will prove not only that they are not inconsistent, but rather mutually supplementary accounts;\* but also that they actually imply

\* The events recorded by Luke are—1. Annunciation

one another, and prove the truth of each other by a series of striking undesigned coincidences.\*

to Zachariah; 2. Annunciation to Mary (in the sixth month thereafter); 3. Mary's visit to Elizabeth (extending to three months later); 4. Birth of John (after 3); 5. His circumcision (eight days after 4); 6. Journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem ("in those days"); 7. Birth of Jesus (while at Bethlehem); 8. Annunciation to the shepherds (the same day); 9. Visit of the shepherds (hastening); 10. Circumcision of Jesus (eight days after); 11. Presentation (thirty-three days later); 12. Return to Nazareth (when all legal duties were performed). The events recorded by Matthew are—A. Mary is found with child (before she is taken to Joseph's house); B. Annunciation to Joseph; C. Mary is taken home by Joseph; D. Visit of the Magi (after Jesus' birth at Bethlehem); E. Flight into Egypt (after their departure); F. Slaughter of the innocents (when Herod had discovered that the wise men had gone); G. Death of Herod; H. Return from Egypt to Nazareth (after Herod's death). These events dovetail beautifully into one another, as follows: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, A, B, C, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, D [12 (E, F, G, H)]. It is only necessary to assume that 12 includes E, F, G and H compendiously, and all goes most smoothly. Other arrangements are also possible—*e. g.* the first half may be varied to 1, 2, A, B, C, 3, 4, 5, 6, or to 1, 2, A, 3, B, C, 4, 5, 6; and the second half to 9, 10, D, 11 [12—(E, F, G, H)], or even to 9, 10, D, E, F, G, half H, 11, half H—12. In the face of so many possible harmonizations it certainly cannot be asserted that harmony is impossible.

\* Thus the account in the one of the annunciation to

And when it is added that the choice of the material which each writer has made can in each incident be shown to have arisen directly out of the purpose of the writer, it may be seen what a load the assertion of disharmony must carry.

Joseph, and that in the other of that to Mary, which are often said to be irreconcilable with one another, actually prove each other's truth. Both assume exactly the same facts at their bases—viz. that Mary conceived a child supernaturally, and remained a virgin while becoming a mother. Moreover, if Luke's narrative be true, then something like what Matthew records must have happened; and if Matthew's be true, something like what Luke records must have happened. Two things needed explanation: why Mary was not crazed at finding herself so strangely with child, and how Joseph, being a just man, could have taken her, in that condition, to wife. Luke's narrative explains the first, but leaves the other unexplained; Matthew's explains the second, but leaves the first unexplained. It is admitted that there was no collusion here. How does it happen, then, that the two so imply one another? Again, Matthew does not mention where Jesus' parents lived before his birth, but only states that after that birth they intended to live in Bethlehem, and, after having been deterred from that, chose Nazareth. Now, why this strange choice? Luke, and Luke alone, supplies the reason: Nazareth was their old home. Still, again, that Luke calls Mary Joseph's "betrothed" in ii. 5 is not only remarkable, but totally inexplicable from Luke; we can only understand it when we revert

The asserted contradiction between Acts and Galatians is already crumbling of its own weight. Thus Keim, certainly no very "apologetic" critic, has shown very clearly that the passage in Galatians has suffered much eis-egesis in order to make out the disharmony,\* and sober criticism will judge that even he has done inadequate justice to the subject. We cannot enter into details in so broad a question: it will be sufficient, however, to call attention to the fact that no disharmony can be made out unless—(1) Violence be done to the context in Galatians, where Paul professes to be giving an exhaustive account, *not* of his visits to Jerusalem, *but* of his opportunities to learn from the apostles. Any visit undertaken at such a time as to furnish no such opportunity (and Acts xii. was such) ought, therefore, to have been omitted. (2) Convenient forgetfulness be exercised of the fact that while the context shows that Paul uses "apostles" in the narrow sense in Gal. i. 19, yet this is not true of Acts ix. 27; but, as Luke's usage shows, the contrary may very well be true (Acts xiv. 4, 14). So that it is in no sense inconsistent for Paul to say that he saw but one apostle, and to Matt. i. 25 and the preceding verses. These are but samples.

\* In *Aus der Urchristenthum* (1878).

Luke that he saw several. (3) Misunderstanding be fallen into as to the nature of the "decree" of Acts xv. 20, and its binding force to churches not yet formed and not parties to the compromise. (4) Misrepresentation be ventured as to the testimony of Galatians as to Paul's relations to the Twelve, which Paul represents to have been most pleasant (Gal. ii. 3, 7-10), but which are made out to have been unpleasant through misinterpretation of phrases in Gal. ii. 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, etc. (5) Incredible pressure of the detailed language of both Galatians and Acts be indulged in. (6) And, finally, a tacit denial be made of the possibility of truth subsisting through differences in choice of incidents arising from the diverse points of view of the two writers. In other words, an unbiased comparison of the two accounts brings out forcibly the fact that there is no disharmony between them at all. Taking these examples as samples (and they are certainly fair samples), it is as clear as daylight that no single case has as yet been adduced where disharmony is a necessary conclusion. Therefore all charges from this side fall to the ground.

CORRECT APPLICATION OF THE OLD  
TESTAMENT.

3. Another favorite charge against the exact truth of the New-Testament Scriptures is drawn from the use of the Old Testament in the New, and especially the phenomena of its quotation. Here also, however, most of the objections urged prove nothing but a radical lack of clear thinking on the part of those who bring them. For instance, Dr. Davidson argues\* that the verbal variation which the New-Testament writers allow themselves in quoting the Old Testament is conclusive against verbal inspiration, for "the terms and phrases of the Old Testament, if literally inspired, were the best that could have been adopted," and therefore the New-Testament writers "should have adhered to the *ipsissima verba* of the Holy Spirit (seeing they were the best) as closely as the genius of the Hebrew and Greek languages allowed." Here, however, a false view of inspiration is presupposed, and also a false view of the nature and laws of quotation. Inspiration does not suppose that the words and phrases written under its influence are the best possible to express the truth, but only that they are an adequate expression of the

\* *Hermeneutics*, p. 513.



truth. Other words and phrases might be equally adequate—might furnish a clearer, more exact, and therefore better, expression, especially of those truths which were subordinate or incidental for the original purpose of the writing. Nor is quotation to be confounded with translation. It does not, like it, profess to give as exact a representation of the original, in *all* its aspects and on *every* side, as possible, but only to give a true account of its teaching in *one* of its bearings. There is thus always an element of application in quotation; and it is therefore proper in quotation so to alter the form of the original as to bring out clearly its bearing on the one subject in hand, thus throwing the stress on the element in it for which it is cited. This would be improper in a translation. The laws which ought to govern quotation seem, indeed, to have been very inadequately investigated by those who plead the New-Testament methods of quotation against inspiration. We can pause now only to insist—(1) That quotation, being essentially different from translation, any amount of deviation from the original, *in form*, is thoroughly allowable, so long as the sense of the original is adhered to; provided only that the quoter is not professing to give the exact form; (2) That any adaptation of the original to the purpose in

hand is allowable, so long as it proceeds by a true exegesis, and thus does not falsify the original; (3) That any neglect of the context of the original is allowable, so long as the purpose for which the quotation is adduced does not imply the context, and no falsification of sense is involved. In other words, briefly, quotation appeals to the sense, not the wording, of a previous document, and appeals to it for a definite and specific end; any dealing with the original is therefore legitimate which does not falsify its sense in the particular aspect needed for the purpose in hand.\* The only question which is relevant here, then, is, Do the New-Testament writers so quote the Old Testament as to falsify it?

Many writers who have pleaded the phenomena of the New Testament against verbal inspiration yet answer this question in the nega-

\* Still further: the amount of freedom with which a document is dealt with will be greater in direct proportion to the thoroughness with which it is understood. If a quoter feels doubtful as to his understanding of it, he will copy it word for word; if he feels sure he understands it fully and thoroughly, he will allow himself great freedom in his use of it; and if he is the author of the original document, still more. If he is conscious of having supernatural aid in understanding it, doubtless the amount of freedom would be greatest of all.

tive. Thus, Mr. Warington admits that there are "no really inapposite quotations"—"the pertinency of the quotations may be marred by their inaccurate citation, but pertinent, notwithstanding, they always are. In a word, while . . . the letter is often faulty, the spirit is always divinely true."\* This is simply to yield the only point in debate. Others, however, of not such clearness of sight, do not scruple to assert that the New-Testament writers do deal so loosely with the Old Testament as to fall into actual falsification, and this mainly in two particulars: they quote passages in a sense different from that which they bore in the Old Testament, and they assign passages to wrong sources.

As an example of those who make the first charge we may take Prof. Jowett, who is never weary of repeating it.† But when we ask for his proof, it is found to rest on four false assumptions, tacitly made: that difference in form means difference in sense, that typology is a dream, that application through a true exegesis is illegitimate, and that all adoption of language binds one to its original sense. Thus Prof. Jowett has difficulty in finding apposite examples,

\* *Inspiration*, p. 107.

† See *St. Paul's Epp.*, etc., vol. i., p. 353 sq.: London, 1855.

and those he does finally fix upon fail on examination.\* Dr. Sanday, in his excellent class-

\* The following are his examples: Rom. ii. 24, "where the words are taken from Isaiah, but the sense from Ezekiel." Possibly a true criticism; what is illegitimate in it? Note, however, that this is probably not a formal quotation, but an expression of Paul's own thought in Old-Testament words, and hence the "as it is written" succeeds (not precedes) the quotation; this "as it is written" may therefore refer to Isaiah as quoted, or to Isaiah and Ezekiel, or to Ezekiel alone, now remembered by the apostle. (Compare Beet with Philippi Meyer *in loc.*) Rom. ix. 33, where only a composition of two passages takes place, which are rightly "harmonized," as Prof. J. admits, in Christ. 1 Cor. iii. 19, where the words are altered from the Psalm to suit the context indeed, but also in direct agreement with their context in the Psalm, so that no alteration in *sense* results. Rom. x. 11, which is called an "instance of the introduction of a word [ $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$ ] on which the point of the argument turns," but which is simply a case of true exegesis and application to the matter in hand. The same passage, and without the  $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$ , had already been quoted in this context (ix. 33); Paul now requotes it, calling attention to the force of the unlimited  $\delta \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$  by emphasizing its sense through an introduced  $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$ , and confirming his interpretation immediately by an additional Scripture (verse 13). Compare Luke xviii. 14, as given in Matt. xxiii. 14, as an example of like explanation. 1 Cor. ~~xv.~~<sup>xiv</sup> 21, which is admitted to be a case "of addition rather than alteration," and any objection to which must rest on a tacit denial of typology, which even Meyer admits to be historically

ification of New-Testament quotations as to

justifiable here. Rom. x. 6-9, presenting alterations which "we should hesitate to attribute to the apostle but for other examples, which we have already quoted, of similar changes," but which, even if considered as a quotation, is defensible enough; then how much more so when we note that it does not profess to be a quotation, and is probably nothing more than the expression of the apostle's thought in old and beloved words! 1 Cor. xv. 45, "a remarkable instance of discrepancy in both words and meaning from Gen. ii. 7." Quite true, and therefore neither in words nor meaning taken from Gen. 7. Prof. J. has simply neglected to note that the quotation extends only to ζῶσαν. (Cf. Meyer *in loc.*) Rom. x. 13, where the charge of change of meaning rests only on a misunderstanding of Mal. i. 2, 3. Rom. iii. 10 *sq.*, "a cento of quotations transferred by the apostle [from their original narrow reference] to the world in general." As if Eccles. vii. 21, Ps. xiii. (xiv.) 12 were not already as universal as anybody could make them, and as if the choice of passages throughout was not admirably adapted to Paul's purpose, which was to prove that all men are sinners—yes, even the Jews. Rom. xii. 20, which requires no remark. And finally *six allegories*, which are immediately admitted not to be allegories in the only sense of the word which would be to their disadvantage—*i. e.* in the sense of an interpretation which treated the literal sense of the words as unimportant, in which sense of the word no allegory occurs in the New Testament. These "allegories" are, some of them, simple illustrations, some *typical* interpretations.

their form,\* cites two passages only which can be plausibly asserted to be cases of mistaken ascription—viz. Mark i. 2 and Matt. xxvii. 9, 10. The first of these ought not to present any difficulty. The form of the sentence shows that the actual words of the citation are parenthetical in essence: Mark declares that John came preaching in accordance with a prophecy of Isaiah, and then inserts, parenthetically, the words referred to, adding also a parallel prophecy of Malachi. That he gives more evidence than he promised ought surely to be no objection; it is enough that, having promised a prophecy from Isaiah, he does give it. This is strengthened by the fact that the prophecy quoted from Malachi is actually based on, and largely drawn out of, Isaiah, so that Isaiah is actually the ultimate source of both the prophecies given, and that from Malachi can be rightly looked upon as simply a further explanation of what is essentially Isaiah's. The quotation in Matt. xxvii. 9, 10, on the other hand, does present a difficulty, and is indeed, in whatever aspect it be looked upon, a very puzzling case. It presents the extreme limit of paraphrase of the original, and it is exceedingly difficult to assign all its parts to their proper originals. It is plain,

\* *Gospels in the Second Century*, pp. 16-25.

however, that Zech. xi. 13 was strongly coloring the writer's thoughts when he wrote it. Yet he ascribes it to Jeremiah. Here, it is said, is a clear case of erroneous ascription. This judgment, however, takes no account of the exceeding difficulty of ascribing the words actually quoted to Zechariah alone. There seem to be but three ways in which the passage can be plausibly understood, and no one of these implies an error on Matthew's part. We may either (1) understand the words as a very free paraphrase of Zech. xi. 13, and then appeal to the fact that in the Talmudic arrangement Jeremiah stood first in the "book of the prophets," so that Jeremiah here stands as general title for the whole book—with Lightfoot, Scrivener, Cook, Schaff-Riddle, etc.; or (2) take the reference in v. 9 as intended for Jer. xviii., xix.—apart from which passage, indeed, the quotation following cannot be understood—and suppose the quotation itself to be deflected to the words of Zechariah, so that the passage becomes analogous to Mark i. 2, and is meant to call attention to both Jeremiah and Zechariah—with (in general) Hengstenberg, Hofmann, Thrupp, Fairbairn, etc.; or (3) we may, with Lange, find the originals of the words in four passages in Genesis, Zechariah and Jer-



emiah, the key to the whole being Jer. xxxii. 6-8. Whichever of these views may be accepted is of no moment so far as the present question is concerned; each alike is consistent with the evangelist's truth, and therefore with his inspiration.

With these examples we must close. It is only necessary to add the caution that the passages dealt with are supposed by Mr. Jowett and Dr. Sanday to be the most striking and difficult ones that could be put to the apologist out of the two hundred and seventy-eight quotations which the New Testament makes from the Old. It is surely not presumptuous, then, to assert that Mr. Warrington's wisdom is apparent, and that it is true that the New-Testament quotations always preserve the sense of the Old-Testament passages.

And with this, this paper must close. It has been possible, of course, to examine only samples of critical objection. But those that have been examined are samples, and have been selected wholly in the interests of the objection. These laid, therefore, and all are laid. The legitimate proofs of the doctrine, resting primarily on the claims of the sacred writers, having not been rebutted by valid objections, that doctrine stands



doubly proved. Gnosis gives place to epignosis, faith to rational conviction, and we rest in the joyful and unshaken certainty that we possess a Bible written by the hands of men indeed. but also graven with the finger of God.





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